

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TOKYO 08388 101021Z
ACTION EB-08

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRD, JA
SUBJECT: JAPANESE EEL IMPORTS

REF: (A) STATE 115801 (B) STATE 115686

1. SOURCES QUOTED PARA 4 OF REF A AS WELL AS TRADING COMPANY CONTACTS TOLD US THAT JAPANESE EEL CULTURALISTS HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO RAISE US ELVERS IN JAPAN DUE TO THE ELVERS' HIGH COST, VULNERABILITY TO DISEASE AND PARASITES, AND "INFERIOR" STATE. JAPANESE PREFERENCES REPORTEDLY LEAN TOWARD EELS OF DOMESTIC, CHINESE, KOREAN, EUROPEAN, AND FINALLY U.S. ORIGIN, IN THAT ORDER.

2. THOUGH ELVERS ARE USUALLY IN SHORT SUPPLY TO JAPANESE CULTURALISTS, JAPANESE TRADING COMPANIES HAVE EXPORTED DOMESTIC ELVERS TO TAIWAN BECAUSE OF CHEAPER REARING COSTS. DUE TO 1976 GOJ PROHIBITION OF EXPORTS DURING THE ELVER CATCHING SEASON (JAN.-APR.), THE TRADING COMPANIES TURNED INSTEAD TO U.S. SOURCES FOR EXPORTS TO TAIWAN. THIS ACCOUNTED FOR THE 1977 SALES QUOTED REF A.

3. HOWEVER, WE WERE TOLD THAT REARING OF U.S. ELVERS IN TAIWAN HAS PROVED UNSUCCESSFUL BECAUSE THE TAIWANESE LACK EXPERIENCE IN HANDLING U.S. STOCK. THIS HAS APPARENTLY DISCOURAGED TAIWANESE CULTURALISTS FROM RE-INVESTING IN
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U.S. ELVERS AND, AS FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE, THIS IS THE MAIN REASON FOR THE SHARP DROP IN U.S. ELVER SALES TO JAPANESE TRADING FIRMS THIS YEAR. MANSFIELD

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